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# THE CHURCH IN WALES.

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## A SPEECH

BY

SIR EDWARD CLARKE, M.P.

(THE SOLICITOR-GENERAL)

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON

*TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1892.*

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SPEECH  
OF  
SIR EDWARD CLARKE, M.P.  
(THE SOLICITOR-GENERAL).

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MR. SAMUEL SMITH having moved, and MR. DILLWYN having seconded, the following Resolution :—

“ That, as the Church of England in Wales has failed to fulfil its professed object as a means of promoting the religious interest of the Welsh people, and ministers only to a small minority of the population, its continuance as an Established Church in the Principality is an anomaly and an injustice which ought no longer to exist.”

THE SOLICITOR-GENERAL (SIR E. CLARKE) said :

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, and on the part of those who sit upon this side of the House, a most definite and uncompromising opposition to the Resolution which has been moved and the policy which prompts that Resolution. Sir, I draw a distinction, and I think it is a natural one, between the Resolution and the policy which it is supposed to represent ; for I am sure it will have been observed by those who have listened to the speeches of the Mover and Seconder of the Resolution that they have paid no attention to the terms of the Resolution at all ; that they have made no attempt to establish any one of the propositions which it contains, and that they have contented themselves by referring to other matters—matters which I own might form matter for consideration in debate, but are not relevant to the propositions put before the House. I am not surprised at the course they have taken. I was, in truth, somewhat amused to find that, having long delayed in choosing the terms of the Resolution, the hon. Member for Flintshire on Friday last put upon the Paper of the House this old Resolution, which has been proposed and debated several times, and which I thought had been

absolutely destroyed last year by the right hon. gentleman the Member for Midlothian. I saw in the paper to-day an inspired communication to a newspaper in which the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire writes that—

“Mr. Gladstone desired to support the Motion for Welsh Dis-establishment this Session as he had done last Session.”

Sir, I wish he were here to-day to do it. I can conceive nothing more satisfactory than that a Resolution aimed at the Church in Wales should be supported as the Resolution of last year was supported by the right hon. gentleman the Member for Midlothian. We have taken care to circulate largely the speech of the right hon. gentleman on that occasion, and it will long be remembered as a lasting demonstration of the futility—I was going to use a stronger word—of the propositions in the Resolution before the House. Does any one who heard him forget the paternal way in which the right hon. gentleman the Member for Midlothian corrected the innocent indifference of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydvil (Mr. Pritchard Morgan) to all the history of the Welsh Church? Does any one forget the way in which he, taking the terms of this Resolution, declared that he could not agree with them, and stated with regard to the first phrase which strikes one's attention, that “the Church of England in Wales” was an entire misrepresentation, and that it would be as reasonable to speak of “the Church of Wales in England” as of “the Church of England in Wales?” Last year the speech of the right hon. gentleman was a very interesting speech. He came down to the House in order to appear to make a recantation of his statement of twenty-one years ago, that it was impossible to dis sever the Welsh Church from the Church of England, and the principal sentence in which that apparent recantation was expressed deserves to be always remembered as the choicest possible example of the verbal dexterity of the right hon. gentleman the Member for Midlothian. I think no such gem was ever contributed to the records of this House as the sentence in which he dealt with his own assertion that it is impossible to dis sever the case of the Welsh



Church and the Church of England. I beg the House to mark the sentence. He said—

“It is quite possible that I may have used that expression which may, when strictly regarded, be found to involve the element of exaggeration.”

The most the right hon. gentleman could do when he came down to recant the declaration of twenty-one years ago, was, not to say that it was an exaggeration, but to say that he “might have used an expression” which “might, when strictly regarded, be found” not to carry with it, but “to involve,” not exaggeration, but “the element of exaggeration.” And, Sir, when the right hon. gentleman had done his part in that apparent recantation, the House will remember how the right hon. gentleman turned with obvious satisfaction to that which was more congenial by far, to speak out his mind, and to declare that—

“The Established Church in Wales is an advancing Church, an active Church, a living Church, and I hope very distinctly a living Church rising from elevation to elevation.”

It is not we who are slow to recall that speech of last year of the right hon. gentleman. That speech contained another remarkable sentence, another remarkable piece of information, as clearly conveyed as words can convey—at all events, as clearly as the words of the right hon. gentleman could convey. He admitted that there might be an element of exaggeration in his former speech; but it is very significant to note the terms in which he refers to the character of the task which would have to be undertaken by anyone who proposed to disestablish the Church of Wales. He said—

“I say now what I believed then, and what I believe now, that the operation of disestablishing the Church of Wales from the Church of England will not be found very easy. I suspect that it will be found that it is tied and knotted and tangled, I might almost say, in such a multitude of legal bonds and meshes with the general body of the Church of England, that it would be a very formidable matter indeed to accomplish this purpose.”

Anyone who heard the right hon. gentleman was conscious of three things; first, that he was anxious to remove the effect which,

during twenty-one years, his earlier speech had been exercising upon the minds of the people of this country, by the defence which he then made for the Church of Wales; secondly, that he bore emphatic testimony to the good which the Church was doing in Wales; and, thirdly, that he gave notice that whatever might be done by those who should come after him, it would not be for him to do the work of Disestablishment. He did support, in a fashion, that Resolution. He did, I believe, pair in favour of that Resolution; but he rested his case with regard to it not upon any attack on the character or work of the Church in Wales, not upon the smallness of the minority of the people forming the membership of the Church, but on the ground that the majority of the people of Wales, he believed, desired Disestablishment. Therefore, not upon the ground of Church policy, or high policy, but upon the ground of separatism, he accepted that majority for the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales. He was yielding to that passing craze of separatism, which has attacked the minority in this House, and which would set up again barriers and fences between the families of our people that have been trodden down and almost erased by the friendly footsteps of many generations. His speech did not greatly help the assailants of the Welsh Church. But what have they themselves to say in regard to the Resolution? I watched the hon. Members the Mover and Seconder closely and they have taken warning by what the right hon. gentleman said last year. They did not this year talk about the Church of England in Wales; nor, indeed, did they make any attempt whatever to prove either of the two propositions contained in the Resolution. The first proposition is—

“That the Church of England in Wales has failed to fulfil its professed object as a means of promoting the religious interests of the Welsh people.”

I will examine the proposition presently: but if I had only to deal with the speeches of the Mover and Seconder of this Resolution, they would require no answer upon that point at all, for they have not attempted to prove that statement by any



particle of evidence that can reasonably be submitted to the judgment of the House. Let us take the second proposition, without passing altogether away from the first, to which I will return. Take the second proposition, that "the Church ministers only to a small minority of the population." If that assertion is true, it ought to be, in some way or the other, capable of proof, and the hon. Members who ask the House of Commons to accept a very serious proposition like this, and who lay it down as one of the premises upon which the House is to move to this decision, ought to give us, at all events, some sort of argument or evidence in its favour. But what have these gentlemen done? Their attempt at proof is trivial and grotesque. The hon. Member for Flintshire, who moved the Resolution, spoke, as he had very good reason for speaking, very doubtfully with regard to statistics. He says that statistics have been freely handled in this House. I am glad to know that they always will be freely handled. I shall say something later on about the statistics prepared by those who have been professionally engaged to support the case which the hon. gentleman puts before the House, and I shall venture to handle them somewhat freely. The hon. Member has his doubts about statistics; but instead of getting as near as he could to the facts with regard to the Church in Wales, instead of giving any sort of excuse—good, bad, or indifferent—for having put the proposition down upon the Paper, he gives us statistics as to the attendance at Welsh churches in Liverpool and Welsh churches in America. What nonsense this is the speaker himself must upon reflection see. He could see in a moment that Welshmen who live in Liverpool are for the most part familiar with the English language, and that when he chose churches in Liverpool at which only Welsh is used, he was choosing churches which would not in the least represent the attendances in the churches in Wales. As to these indefinite statistics from America, they seem to be the information of some anonymous person as to that country; they cannot have any relation whatever to the condition of affairs in Wales. And yet the hon. Member, after giving us these fragmentary and irrelevant anecdotes, proceeds to say that he has now overwhelmingly

proved his proposition that the people of Wales are Nonconformists. Let me pass on to another matter with which the hon. Member dealt. He says that in past times the Church of Wales was a corrupt and incompetent Church. He could hardly use expressions of reproach in describing the condition of Church work either in Wales or in England during, say, the reigns of the Georges, with which I should not be inclined, most sorrowfully, to agree. It was not in Wales alone, but in England also, that there was in those days a decadence of the Church work and a degradation in the character of the ministers of the Church which is now a subject of sorrowful reflection. Yet there were always good and holy and religious-minded men in the Church of Wales as well as in the Church of England, who, to the best of their ability, discharged their duty both to God and man in the ministry of the Church; but there were, doubtless, many others of a different character; men who lived—in England as well as in Wales—weak and degraded lives. I am glad to say, however, that in Wales, as well as in England, the Established Church has escaped from the discredit which has been brought upon it by this latter class. Our extrication from these difficulties was probably earlier than in Wales. We in England were a less scattered people; public opinion was more effective and more active, and perhaps it would be right to say, that owing to circumstances a higher standard of character had been maintained, so we escaped earlier than in Wales. But, thank God, the troubles and degradation to which I refer have now almost gone! We have got rid in England, and I believe in Wales, of the drinking parson, the sporting parson, the gambling parson, of the pluralist and the absentee; we have nearly got rid of the magistrate parson, and, for my own part, I am very anxious that we should get rid of the political parson. These reforms have already been secured to a great extent in both countries, and those who are most active and vigorous in carrying on Church work in England and in Wales, are men who devote themselves to discharging their high duties to the State and to the Church in the most self-denying exercise of their great calling. But when this is the case both in England

and in Wales, to what purpose is it that we are to be reminded of those scandals of a century and a half ago, or even of things which may, in scattered instances, be found a little later? The hon. Member who moved this Resolution gave us, as his most recent instance of misconduct in Wales, an instance of a Bishop, who, in 1830, was enjoying an enormous income, and appointing his sons and his nephews to sinecure livings. Sixty-one years is a substantial time in the history of a religious body, and during those sixty-one years the progress of the Church, both in England and Wales, has been a course of continuous and undisturbed improvement; and now no one, I am sure, can allege or point to any scandal with regard to England or to Wales comparable to that which the hon. gentleman has spoken of as having existed sixty-one years ago. Let me suggest to the hon. Member that he was not logical in bringing this sort of evidence before the House in support of his Resolution. If the hon. Member could have said that one hundred and fifty years ago the Church in Wales was an active and a vigorous Church, preaching the pure faith, ministering diligently and faithfully to the people, discharging its duties with zeal and with earnestness, whereas now it had lost that pure faith, and the energetic and true life, had become corrupt, and disorderly, and inefficient, then he would have given us some ground for his bringing forward his Motion to disestablish the Church in that part of the United Kingdom. But when he points to the fact that the Church in Wales one hundred and fifty years ago was feeble and unfit for its Divine work, and that now it has risen to such a pitch of efficiency and of purity that no one will challenge it, and no one will bring an accusation against it, is he not giving us the very best reason in the world for not destroying a Church whose energy has thus been revived and purified, and for allowing the country in which it exists to profit by its teaching and its work? I venture to say that in the line he has taken and the suggestions he has made as to those scandals of a long-gone past being sufficient to induce us to disestablish the Church of Wales, he is directly contradicting the hopes and teachings of those great men whose memory he calls upon us to reverence.



Never was a more fitting memorial placed in Westminster Abbey, or one more thoroughly deserved, than the medallions of the brothers Wesley which are upon its walls. Does not the hon. Member see that in asking us to disestablish the Church in Wales he is acting in direct contradiction to their hopes and principles, and to the Society which they have founded.

MR. SAMUEL SMITH: No.

SIR EDWARD CLARKE: I will prove it. The hon. Member has said that the great men he has mentioned—Wesley, Rowland, and Whitfield—had been turned out of the Church. He is mistaken. Wesley and Rowland remained faithful members of the Church, and they lived and died declared members of the Church. I believe there was a time in the early part of his life when Wesley was not admitted to the pulpits of this country; but he was admitted to those pulpits before he died. John Wesley was re-admitted to those pulpits; and his last words, practically the words of testament by Wesley to those who were to follow him in the body which he had founded, constituted a declaration that he lived and died in the Church of England, and he left his dying injunctions to the members of that body that they should never depart from the doctrines and principles of that Church. I must mention another matter. We are sometimes told that the Church ought to be disestablished in order that she may be freed from control. We had a scene in this House, upon the 29th of July of last year, which was very painful to Churchmen who were trying to pass a Bill to enable the Church to expel from its benefices clergymen who had been guilty of gross immorality or other grave offences. That Bill was opposed, and the Churchmen were told in so many words that we should not be allowed to purify the Church; and that if we wanted a measure to give power to the Church to purify itself, we must consent to Disestablishment. I remember on that occasion three hon. Members on the opposite side of the House—the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. H. H. Fowler), the hon. Member for the Eccles Division of Lancashire (Mr. Roby), and the hon. Member for the Exchange Division of Liverpool (Mr. Neville)—all protesting

against this opposition, and the hon. Member for the Exchange Division of Liverpool said that to postpone dealing with grave scandals until they could deal with the question of Establishment would be a crying injustice. But it is a mistake to say that a disestablished Church would be a free Church, free from control. At the present moment the great Nonconformist bodies of this country are limited not only as to their discipline, but as to their doctrine, by bonds which Parliament alone can break. The papers yesterday had a quotation from the *Methodist Recorder* with regard to a proposed change in the regulations of the body which follows John Wesley; and the section of the deed poll which the Wesleyan Methodists are now coming to Parliament to ask to be relieved from by Act of Parliament is a very remarkable one. They cannot now allow a minister to remain more than three years upon a circuit, and the Wesleyan Methodists are now coming to Parliament asking to be relieved from that regulation which prevents them appointing any person for more than three years successively to the use and enjoyment of any of their chapels, and I think the hon. Member, when he speaks of a free Church, will find in the last line of this section a very interesting refutation. It was enacted by the eleventh section of Mr. Wesley's deed poll, of the 28th of February, 1784, that—

“The Conference shall not, nor may, nominate or appoint any person to the use and enjoyment of, or to preach and expound God's Holy Word in any of the chapels and premises so given or conveyed, or which may be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, who was not either a member of the Conference or admitted into connection with the same, or upon trial as aforesaid, nor appoint any person for more than three years successively to the use and enjoyment of any chapel and premises already given, or to be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, except ordained ministers of the Church of England.”

At this moment the only persons the Wesleyan Methodist Conference can by law continue more than three years in one place are the ordained ministers of the Church of England. But, Sir, I go further even than this. In the year 1818, there was

constituted by Conference a Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society, and in the year 1871 an Act was passed, the 34th and 35th Vict. chapter 40, which gave legislative sanction to the Constitution arrived at in 1818. It was enacted by Section 4 that—

“Nothing in this Act contained shall authorise any alteration in the doctrine of the Society as set forth in Part II. of the General Principles of the Methodist Constitution.”

Another section allowed them to vary parts of the Constitution which referred only to discipline. The Schedule of that Act contains different parts of that Methodist Constitution, from which I will read an extract—

“Does not the Methodist Society profess to belong to the Church of England? Yes, as a body; for they originally emanated from the Church of England; and the Rev. John Wesley, the venerable founder of the Connexion, made a declaration of a similar import within less than a year preceding his decease, ‘I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it.’”—(See *Arminian Magazine* for April, 1790.) “This, however, is not to be understood as interfering with the right of private judgment in places where education or prejudices attach members to other Established Churches.”

That, Sir, is in the Designs, Part 1, which they are at liberty to alter; but in Part 2, which that body cannot alter except by coming to Parliament, we find this, “What is the foundation of the Methodist doctrine? The Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Wherein consists the unity of the Methodist doctrine?” The hon. Member who moved this Resolution said that the doctrine was drawn pure and direct from Holy Writ. I will read to him the doctrine which is obligatory by Act of Parliament upon this body; it cannot be altered without the consent of Parliament. The Primitive Methodist Society of Ireland—

AN HON. MEMBER: Is it a public Act or a private Act?

SIR. E. CLARKE: A public Act. The hon. Member will



find it on the table from which I have taken it, and the answer given to the question of what the unity of the Methodist doctrines consisted was as follows:—

“Answer.—In teaching and enforcing those doctrines only which are contained in the Scriptures, as taught and explained in the writings of the Rev. John Wesley and Rev. John Fletcher, particularly Mr. Wesley’s notes on the Old and New Testament, his eight volumes of sermons, his appeals, and the doctrinal parts of the *Arminian Magazine* as maintained by him and published to the period of his decease, also Mr. Fletcher’s Checks and letters, published by Mr. Wesley.”

And when the hon. Member speaks of the freedom of a Church which is not established as the Church of England, has he forgotten for the moment that if any body, such as a Church, comes to be possessed of property or endowment of any sort or kind there is a condition of things established which prevents it from altering its doctrines or the terms of its membership except by appeal to the House of Commons? With regard to the matter of the number of people in Wales, the hon. Member for Swansea made an observation as to his wish for a census. Well, we have always wished for a census. We are anxious to have a census. It is not the fault of Churchmen that there has not been a census made in Wales as there is in Ireland, to ascertain the religious opinions of the people. Hon. Members on the other side may well be justified in the opposition that they make to that proposal. I do not complain; they form their own judgment in the matter, and they object to our proposal being carried out; but, at all events, if they object to any record being taken by an independent and authoritative body, it is not for them to ask that we shall accept the amateur and somewhat suspicious attempts that they make to get these returns. With regard to this question, which I consider an important one, the hon. Member who moved the Resolution gave the go-by altogether to that part of the case, and says fairly, “I do not choose to deal with Welsh statistics.” I do not think that is quite satisfactory; I think we ought to be able to find out in some way what is the proportion between Churchmen and Nonconformists in Wales.

The Nonconformists say they desire to obtain returns of the attendances at our churches. Well, they have made several attempts to do this. In the year 1887 it was announced that a religious census was about to be taken by a very active and vigorous Nonconformist in Wales. He was believed to have taken it. He did not publish it. About two years later he published fragments of it, and explained that in the cases in which he had taken returns he had a private census taken for the re-consideration of the figures. I do not say the figures given were not true. One cannot say that; there was no comparative statement on the other side by which to test them, but I do say they cannot call upon us to pay any very great respect to an amateur experiment of this kind, founded upon a principle unfair to the churches and unfairly applied. I say "a principle unfair to the churches." When the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian had occasion in this House to discuss some years ago—I think forty years ago—the Motion of Mr. Miall with regard to the disestablishment of the Church of England, he protested against the idea that you could test the efficiency of an established Church by counting the number of persons present at a single service upon a particular Sunday. If you took the number of persons present at public worship you would not establish a fair comparison between the Established Church and other bodies which think much more of the preaching of the Word and of attending at particular times in their churches and chapels. It would not be a fair comparison. But I will take for examination a very recent example—the most recent return, I think—taken by one of those who have been professionally engaged in support of the Liberationist movement in Wales. There has been a Welsh Campaign Fund started, and some of these needy Nonconformists of Wales have given sums of £500 each to establish that fund. I will not inquire too curiously how it has been spent, but I believe it has been partly spent in obtaining the returns published in the *Times* newspaper in December of last year. Mr. Owen Owens published in the *Times* of the 18th December, 1891, a return which he had obtained from an inquiry set on foot by him

into the attendance at churches in the diocese of St. Asaph; and he said that the return he gave showed that "the proportion of attendants at church on a Sunday did not reach 10 per cent. of the population." It was a curious conclusion, and I should like to tell the House how it was arrived at. There were 73 parishes taken in the diocese of St. Asaph. He got out a total of 113,000 persons in the population and of 11,009 persons in attendance in the churches; and he said that taking these figures they represented a proportion of something less than 10 per cent. I do not think that 10 per cent. is an insignificant number when you take the attendance at one service only at a church in a rural, and in many parts a somewhat wild, district upon an extremely inclement day in the month of November. But let me take it. This census can be examined, and has been examined, and the figures which I am going to refer to have been published and have never been answered. At Wrexham the amateur, who was present on that day, omitted five places of church worship altogether, and he estimated the population of Wrexham at not less than 2,000 persons below its real number. In one place the two enumerators were aged respectively eleven and thirteen years, and, as might have been expected from such juvenile officials, there was a difference of 45 per cent. between them. But in nine places—9 churches out of 73—the numbers given as the congregation at service were smaller than the number of communicants who had communicated at these churches on Easter Sunday. I need not draw the inference from that fact. But there was one place of all these 73 which was correct, and only one. It was the parish of Hawarden, and the parish of Hawarden, a large parish with over 6,000 inhabitants, has, I am very glad to say, a diligent Church ministry and a large attendance at the services. The parish of Hawarden came out in these returns in a way which corresponds with the returns made by the Rector of Hawarden to the Bishop of the diocese. The explanation is an interesting one. The Rector of Hawarden is the Rev. Stephen Gladstone, who knew this inquiry was to be made, and offered to give the persons who were conducting the inquiry the figures himself. They accepted



the figures, and thus the parish of Hawarden had the singular distinction of being the only correct return, so far as we can see, in the whole of the 73. Now, Sir, this is an example of the statistics which have been given by our opponents. With regard to them, I do not impute bad faith. The controversy we are engaged in to-day may last for many years, and for my own part I will take care, from the beginning to the end of this controversy, that no word shall be spoken by me which will embitter the antagonism among those who, to my thinking, ought to be working for and in one common cause. I have given an example now of the statistics with regard to ourselves. Let me give something which I confess I am inclined to consider more trustworthy. There are reasons, as I have shown you, to distrust these statistics about us. I think we are entitled to accept the statistics of our antagonists in this matter about themselves. With regard to them, I think they ought not to complain if we examine their own statistics and apply them to the consideration of the question, and I want to ask the attention of the House to some interesting figures. The four large bodies of Nonconformists in Wales are—the Calvinistic Methodists, who I believe outnumber by about one-half any other Nonconformist body, the Independents, the Wesleyans, and the Baptists, and they comprise the large majority, almost the whole, of the Nonconformist population in Wales. Now these four bodies issue every year an account of their Church membership. Two of them issue the account in this form. The Calvinistic Methodists and the Independents give a table of the number of members of their Church, and they also give the number of the adherents of the Churches. It is an important matter to remember what an adherent means, and I shall read the definition of adherent, which is an authoritative definition of the Nonconformist body—

“Adherent includes all who attend regularly or irregularly at Nonconformist places of worship; all who avail themselves of the religious services of ministers or members of the Nonconformist body on the occasion of sickness or death in their family; and children of all ages.”

In other words, all who can be directly or indirectly described as

Nonconformists. The adherents of the Calvinistic Methodists and Independents including the members are just over twice as many as the members alone. Applying this ratio to the other two bodies, who give only the number of members but not of adherents, and doubling their figures, or rather more than doubling their figures, in order to produce a fair result; the result of this is: The total adherents in Wales, including Monmouthshire, of the four largest Nonconformist bodies is, according to the last return—that of 1890—814,277, from their own books. That is 46 per cent. of the population of the country. I think the hon. member for Swansea some years ago gave an estimate in this House of the number of persons who were Nonconformists, including under that total the Roman Catholics, who were not included in these four bodies, and he estimated them at 55,000. I believe 56,000 is about right. That would add another 3 per cent. to the Nonconformist body; and so, according to their own statistics, including adherents, including every child and everybody casually brought into contact with them, the largest number they can claim of members and of adherents attached to their body, comes to 49 per cent. only of the population.

MR. T. E. ELLIS (Merionethshire): Supposing the rest conform?

SIR E. CLARKE: I shall finish my statement, but I assure the hon. Member I shall not omit to notice the question. But there is another very interesting fact with regard to this. Nonconformity is not evenly distributed over Wales. The eastern part of Wales—the seven counties which may fairly be called the eastern part of Wales—are places of large population and of increasing population. The six counties in the West of Wales are places more sparsely occupied, of decreasing population. In the seven eastern counties, which contain 72 per cent. of the population, the adherents of the Nonconformist bodies, including Roman Catholics, who are more numerous in that than in any other part of Wales, amount to only 35 per cent. of the population. So that, according to their own statistics, in that part of Wales which is increasing in population, and full of prosperity and promise for the future, it is not much more than one-third

of the population that, by any method of calculation, can be brought within the Nonconformist body. It was said, "Do the others conform?" I do not understand the question. There is no such thing as conformity to an Established Church in the sense which it necessarily has when dealing with a Nonconformist body. The claim of the Church is that all belong to her body, and are entitled to her ministrations; that the doors of her churches are open to all, the ministration of her Sacraments given to all, that the consolations of religion will be given by her clergy to all people amongst whom they live. The strength and the power of the Established Church is that she directs her unceasing effort to that large body which may not have come into direct relation with any religious community at all, but which is open to the influence of Christianity and the influence of the teaching of a worthy Church; and, again, I say no one will deny—I am sure the Hon. Member for Denbigh (Mr. Osborne Morgan) himself, who is going to speak in this debate, will not deny—the value of the ministrations of the ministers of the Welsh Church, although they may be given to those who have not absolutely declared themselves to be members of a religious body. It was not in a hasty or debating speech that the hon. Member expressed, not long ago, the very highest opinion of the work of the Welsh clergy. In an article, I think in 1885, in the *Nineteenth Century*, he paid his testimony to the character of the clergy in Wales, and a better or more hearty eulogium could not be expected from the most devoted defender of Church Establishment. As the question has been asked, I should just like to point out this. It has been said how about those who lie outside of the membership of the Nonconformist body. But when one is talking about the membership of the Nonconformist body, and the number of Nonconformist chapels, and the number of Nonconformist ministers in Wales, one is necessarily exaggerating to a great degree the influence that Nonconformity has in Wales. I will give an instance. In the Diocese of St. Asaph there are 208 churches of the Established Church. These 208 churches are served by 312 clergymen, and in each parish there



is a resident clergyman, who has in some cases assistant curates, attending to the people among whom he lives. What is the case with the Nonconformist Body? The Calvinistic Methodists are a very strong body in the Diocese of St. Asaph. They have 330 chapels in that Diocese. But they have only 70 pastors. Of these 70 pastors 35 have more than one chapel to attend to; and there are 43 other persons who make up the ministry of the Calvinistic Methodists in that Diocese to the number of 113. Altogether, there are 43 persons besides these pastors—men, no doubt, of exemplary life and great capacity to lead others to a religious life—but persons obliged to occupy their daily time in other and secular employment.

MR. A. O'CONNOR (Donegal, E.): Like St. Paul.

SIR E. CLARKE: I heard the interruption. If St. Paul had not had to work for his living he would have had more time to work for his Master. And I say, while these men may be men of good qualities to guide and lead and encourage others in religion, at all events they cannot, by the nature of things, give such constant pastoral care to the people amongst whom they live, as could be given by those whose whole lives are spent in the discharge of those duties. There exist, then, 330 chapels in the Diocese of St. Asaph; there are 70 pastors. Of these 70 pastors 35 have more than one chapel to attend to. I do not care to dwell upon this subject. I do not care—for my part, I absolutely refuse—to make any attack upon the organisation or work of the Nonconformist bodies; but I propose to read to the House an extract, not from a writer upon our side, but from a writer who was speaking from the Nonconformist side with regard to this matter. On the 14th May, 1891, there appeared a leading article in the *Goleuad*, which is the official organ of the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales. This is an extract from the leading article:—

“As is seen in the figures used by Mr. Roberts, our chapels (eglwysi) throughout North and South Wales number 1,258; of these, 724 are in North Wales, including three in Liverpool and Manchester. According to our diary there are only 236 pastors to take care of all these churches. . . . Let us take an example. We know a district within a presbytery in North Wales where there are

19 churches, and there is only one pastor in the whole district. In cases of illness amongst our members, and when special circumstances call for the presence of a minister, to marry, to baptise, to promote beneficent movements, such as temperance, &c., to hold classes for the young people, to defend the rights of Nonconformists against civil and religious violence and oppression, the Calvinistic Methodists have only one pastor for this tract of country. In the same district there are at least ten clergymen, the great majority of them evincing great zeal for the "Mother Church," and untiring in their efforts to win Nonconformists to their fold. Read the reports of the Sunday Schools in this district, and you find a very great decline in the work of the schools."

I think we are entitled to point out to hon. Members who are seeking to disturb and destroy the work of that Church which maintains in every parish throughout the Diocese a clergyman diligent in the performance of his duty, and ministering to the people in whose midst he is placed; that those on their own side, who are most deeply and ardently interested in the work of Calvinistic Methodism, lament the fact, that by the paucity of their pastors as compared with the numbers of their churches, their people are practically left without guardianship, and practically without guidance in spiritual matters.

Sir, the time may come when the timid inveracities of this Resolution shall give place to a formal scheme proposed to Parliament by a Minister of the Crown for the humiliation and the despoiling of the Church. If that day should come how will the opposing ranks be filled, and in what principles will the defenders of the Church find their inspiration. We are sometimes told that we are defending invested interests and a Government Department. Sir, to some of us it is no question of the defence of a political institution. The Church is of Divine foundation, its system is Divinely ordered, its faith Divinely guarded from corruption or decay. In the Establishment we find the privilege and obligation of a universal duty; in the endowments which the piety of her sons has, in past ages, consecrated to the Divine service we see the guarantee for the independence of her ministers, and for that unfailing service of charity, by which far more than this her heritage is given directly

to the poor, in the relief of ignorance and sorrow, of sickness and of want. In our belief the inheritance of the Church is the most precious possession of the poor. This is not your belief, but it is that which I share with millions of my fellow-countrymen. Many of those are to be found in the ranks of the Liberal party ; many who, in presence of such considerations as these, will refuse to join in a policy of destruction. But these will not be all. There will, I believe, be with us many who do not share in this belief, do not approve the system of the Church, and do not profess her creed, but who accept as their rule of political conduct something better than the party expediency of the moment. What, Sir, is the characteristic of the higher statesmanship of the day. It is that the principle that the welfare of the people is the supreme law is becoming more and more the rule of our legislation, and of all the activities of our public life. And this other truth we ought to have learned, that the welfare of the people does not mainly depend upon forms of Government, or the arrangement of political privileges, or even on the distribution of the national wealth. It depends on the character of the people. Who will deny that the teaching of the National Church is one of the most potent of all the influences which form and elevate the national character ? Fixed in a pure and manly faith ; secured by the very conditions of its establishment from the spasmodic extravagances of religious fervour, and the more permanent danger of priestly domination ; it is the strongest of all existing forces to strengthen and refine the spirit of our people, and to teach them that in the fulfilment of Christian duty lies the only hope of protecting our social life from the extremes of a cynical selfishness on the one hand, and on the other from the vagaries of a fantastic and predatory socialism. Sir, we of the Tory party gladly and gratefully accept the honourable duty of standing foremost in this cause. But we believe that as the years go by there will come to our side more and more of those who place the national welfare above the ties of a political combination, and will claim to share with us the patriotic work of guarding the inseparable interests of the Church and the People.



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